

Edited by John Harney and John Rimmer

Winter 1971



THE CHARLTON CRATER

JOHN HARNEY
INVESTIGATES A CLASSIC CASE
OF UFOLOGICAL
SELF-DECEPTION

EDITORIAL

Personalities

UFOs are such vague and transient things that it is not unnatural that those who are studying them should at times seem to take precedence over the actual phenomena. Personalities in ufology sometimes seem larger than life, and from a distance even appear menacing or overwhelming. It is inevitable therefore that some aspects of our field of study have become identified with individuals almost to the point of exclusiveness.

As a result of this it is often difficult to make any form of objective (or even subjective--that's not illegal!) criticism of certain theories, events or manifestations without being construed as launching a personalised attack on some hapless individual. What this might lead to is apparent elsewhere in this journal. Conversely it is sometimes necessary to take a harshly critical look at the opinions and attitudes of an individual in order to come to an accurate evaluation of the viewpoint with which such a person has become identified.

Both these forms of critical analysis are a long way from the 'bitter personal attack' -- an accusation which is often hurled at ufological writers who undertake such analysis. So long as ufologists allow themselves the luxury of personalising various aspects of the subject, and letting their emotions, morals and personal attitudes become entwined with the material that others are attempting to study, they have no-one to blame but themselves if those aspects of their personality are considered matters for public debate.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Mr. ALFONSO MARTINEZ TABOAS

Recently I received some back issues of your bulletin and they are great.

I was glad to see some difference in your bulletin. I was glad, too, to see that many of your readers are on the side of the New Ufology. I am too on this side.

I am a student of demonology and other matters and I think that John Keel's theory may explain many or all of these apparitions.

What puzzles me is that Keel's book doesn't mention the now popular parapsychological approach to the subject. I have talked with various of them about Keel's theory and they laugh at it.

Keel recently said that UFOs could be investigated by them. But I fear that if they introduce themselves into ufology then they will rapidly disregard Keel's theory. Many of them think all the poltergeist cases, etc., are caused by energies of adolescents. If they--the parapsychologists--don't want to accept the spiritual origin of many apparitions, it is less likely they will accept the interference of elementals in these cases.

I have studied parapsychology and I admit that the human being can produce certain effects by his energies, but I think that unknown beings or forces can take advantage of these energies for their purpose and create effects of their own.

Lastly, I will be glad to read in some future issue what your readers think of the parapsychological explanation for the poltergeist, apparitions at the moment of death, etc.

Yours truly, Alfonso Martinez Taboas, 17 Street, 1088, VillaM Nevares Dev., Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00927

From Mr. PETER ROGERSON

Dear John,

Here's a brief reply to Alan Sharp.

1. I see no reason to lump Keel and Vallee together, or either with Professor Agrest.

2. There seems no reason why anyone wanting to study high strangeness reports should bother about people who mistake the moon for a Martian spaceship. Misidentification can usually be recognised fairly easily and eliminated. A 'real' UFO is something ostensibly perceived in the air, or on the ground, or under water, which ostensibly behaves like a 'machine' of some sort, which puzzles the witness, and can not be reconciled easily with a known stimulus. Such a definition may be semantically incorrect, but the initials UFO are easier to use than OAAAP (Ostensible Anomalous Aerial Phenomenon) Much of Alan's arguments are semantic quibbling.

3. Alan must possess ESP, how else does he know that Vallee 'believed in the ETH'. It isn't very evident from Vallee's books.

4. Vallee does not say that he has abandoned 'scientific impartiality' in Magonia. Magonia is 'not scientific' because it chronicles rumours and beliefs, without attempting interpretation.

5. Vallee's works in Anatomy and Challenge are about the only scientific works on ufology published before 1969.

6. Vallee has widened his study of 'occupants' because new studies have shown that many of the 'contact' type stories (e.g. Schwarz's study of Gary Wilcox) have shown that in some such cases, the witnesses believe that they have had a real experience, and in Magonia Vallee is documenting beliefs. Vallee stresses that one should hold all cases to be literally true.

7. As for Warminster, Alan is stating the obvious. There seems little reason to doubt that the 'Aenstrian' was a very real terrestrial, and undoubtedly one of the legions of psychotics who infested Warminster at one time. Despite this, some puzzling events have taken place.

8. Alan's lightning stroke hypothesis for Charlton had a very limited circulation, BUFORA Journal and MUFORG Bulletin. Vallee probably saw neither. Also Alan's view was criticised by a lightning expert, C. Maxwell Cade.

9. Vallee does not claim that UFOs are 'supernatural beings' but points out similarities between two sets of belief. Alan's criticisms of 'fairy rings' and the 'green demon' are transcendental examples of pedantic obtuseness. No doubt we should intersperse all kiddies' fairy tales with 'explanations'. Alan's attitude reminds me of those stern Victorians who believed the only worthwhile things were practicalities and things that made money.

10. Actually Neanderthal man is now regarded as an aberrant sub-species of Homo Sapiens. Geologically earlier specimens tend to show more 'modern' features.

11. Alan's explanation for gnomes (as bats) is quite unconvincing. By a similar process, Aime Michel demonstrated that church steeples were cows.

12. Alan's treatment of Fatima is far too superficial. As I have pointed out, Fatima is part of a mythological tradition far older than Christianity. Nor is his explanation apparently acceptable to psychologists.

13. I agree that the AVB story cannot be taken literally. But as a symbol of the intimate relationship between us and 'Magonia' it has tremendous force.

14. Whatever one thinks of Keel's pseudo-parapsychology, there seems little doubt that Keel actually 'experienced' these bizarre events. Nor are they confined to John Keel. In his recent study of 'Dr X', Aime Michel noted similar effects. There were MIB stories far more remarkable than anything discussed by Keel in the 1905 wave.

15. Not all alleged phenomena of physical mediumship can be regarded as conjuring tricks, though about 95% were. Some of the ostensible phenomena of D.D.Home, Eusapia Palladino, etc., are puzzling.

16. There seems no justifiable reason for supposing that Vallee, or even Keel, are trying to remove ufology from the areas of normal debate.

Throughout the article Alan writes like a 19th century contributor to Practical Mechanics, confident in the ability of science to discover the whole nature of the universe in the space of a single lifetime, and with that breezy, self confident smugness (I'm glad I'm a superior, rational, 19th century Englishman, not one of those degraded, superstition-ridden savages) typical of the period.

There has been a century of learning since, during which the 'reality' and significance of dreams, myth and folklore have been established. The 19th century writers who proclaimed that large areas of human experience are delusion, are as dead as any medieval demonologists. It seems a pity to try a resurrection trick on either of them.

Peter Rogerson, 8 Braddon Avenue, Urmston, MANCHESTER, M31 1UE

From Mr ARTHUR SHUTTLEWOOD

One notes, with a quiet and understanding chuckle, that Alan W. Sharp looks out from his sacred ivory tower and INSISTS that ufology "must be studied in a logical, objective manner, or not at all." This has the ring of dictatorship about it. You've got to be sharp to out-sharp Sharp, eh? But let's be democratic.

His vision-restricting attitude, in face of swelling testimony globewide, will get neither him nor more earnest research students anywhere at all as to the true nature of this important subject. It is a matter which—by virtue of numerous facets and aspects that bewilder and befog scientific concepts of today that are universally inadequate in vision—will always defy the approach he advocates—nay INSISTS—must fit his puritannical rather than pure terminology.

I see, too, we are back to scurrilous attacks on personal character and integrity, rather than objective presentation of facts, in your latest abysmally trite issue. Out with the scalping hatchets and carving knives to cripple those whose views (because they have had considerable experience of the phenomena) are more valid, sensible and fair than your own, which are strangled in a one-sided web of ignorance.

Those whom you try to intimidate (and I'm positive we have no fear of a trio of critics, especially armchair variety, of earth, when we dare to walk among the unknown!) are amused and share welling pity for MUF0B content and policy; for they have enjoyed a privilege none of your home-bred correspondents (or so-called editors) have known. At least, they have had more than casual brushes with UFO manifestations and assess them accordingly. Has it ever struck your rather feather-pated attitude that it needs a great deal of moral courage to stick one's neck out and affirm: "I have seen something inexplicable"? It does need enormous courage, equal to that I knew on the battlefield in the last war, to do this, knowing one will automatically be branded as a liar, crank, hypocrite or worse. This courage deserves respect, instead of MUF0B belittling and crude criticism far removed from human decency.

Without our experience, such puny puppets of Condon thinking are sunk without trace; and the MUF0B MOB ("those people from the north who are blind to reality," is a description I have frequently heard) is drowning in deep water with no public interest in their dogmatic and dreadfully dull viewpoints based on personal INEXPERIENCE only.

Anyway, why should we suffer the short-sighted, visionless, prejudiced and self-inflating pontificating of three stick-in-the-mud scribes whose active research in operational fields of practical work is practically nil? A trio whose pompous and pedantic phraseology is boring and lifeless, because it is not chained to links of personal experience? Who on earth do Sharp, Rimmer and Harney think they are; and whom do they represent so bovinely in the face of weighty evidence that shrieks: "UFOs are for real." Why do they persist in bedevilling instead of aiding the UFO cause in credibility? We know, of course, but are too polite and gentlemanly to speak so bluntly and cruelly!

What acid-tongued and one-track-minded minority groups like MUF0B fail to appreciate is that their voices are mere squeaks against the leonine roars of the majority. Therefore, they are freaks who cannot understand that statistical weights of evidence are more valid than the infamous Condon report which blew up into nothingness because not one of the "experts" (??!!) had ever seen anything unusual. MUF0B comes into the same abysmal bracket of ignorance.

I say this not unkindly, for I have always stressed one has to see to credit or believe in UFO manifestation.

I could not sink to the intolerance of Sharp, whose constant and petty allusions and sniping about Shuttlewood mistaking a thunderstorm for a UFO has appeared in print so many times with monotonous repetition. Has it ever entered your devious minds that poor old Shuttlewood, knowing full well even at that early stage that MUF0B carried scalping knives everywhere they went to try and kill off valuable evidence at source, said this deliberately in order to get rid of the dragging influence of disbelieving MUF0B MOBsters? Think it over... Look at yourselves for a welcome change and note the many human failings in contradistinction to "judge not lest ye be judged." You have cast enough stones, but soon they will rebound. Mark my words, uttered without malice aforethought like those crawling over your bulletin like aimless spider-legs!

A feather-brained attitude of mind always fights a losing battle against the better-thinking majority. So wake up! Start to really live (there's a nice split infinitive for purist Rimmer to grip onto) and go out among your fellow beings in search of that which DOES exist, despite your nagging doubts and at

times character-savaging mania.

Yours not unkindly, Arthur Shuttlewood, 17 Portway, Warminster, Wiltshire.

P.S. Happy New UFO Year!

P.P.S. After your next issue, please don't send any more! I want helpful aids, not destructive nonsense, in my search for UFO truths.

THE SEARCH FOR PHYSICAL EVIDENCE - Part Four

by John Harney

The Charlton Crater

There have been relatively few cases of alleged physical evidence of UFOs in Britain, and of these few the Charlton Crater is by far the most notorious example.

Serious attempts to provide rational explanations for the occurrence have been consistently ridiculed by the UFO enthusiasts who apparently prefer to believe that the phenomenon was produced by the landing of a flying saucer.

In July, 1963, a crater about 1 ft. deep, 3 ft. in diameter, with a hole in the centre about 3 ft. deep was found on the boundary between a potato field and a barley field at Manor Farm, Charlton, Wiltshire (near Shaftesbury, Dorset). The crater was discovered by farmer Roy Blanchard, according to Robert Chapman (1), or by a Mr Reg Alexander, according to Leonard Cramp (2). Take your pick.

It is not clear from the various accounts just how the crater came to receive such wide publicity and close scrutiny from military and scientific experts, journalists, ufologists, and assorted cranks and publicity seekers. The incident which seems to have attracted the attention of the national news media and Members of Parliament was the arrival on the scene of an Army Bomb Disposal Squad. These gentlemen found no bomb, but did detect metal, which was in fact magnetite, naturally occurring in the soil of that area.

Unfortunately the sensational publicity accorded to the affair did not provide a suitable atmosphere for rational, scientific investigation. A lump of iron ore recovered from the crater by the Army team was pounced on by Patrick Moore, who hastily pronounced it to be a meteorite.

The issue was further confused by the arrival on the scene of a gentleman calling himself "Dr Randall", who purported to be an "Australian astro-physicist". This character assured the gentlemen of the press that the crater was caused by a flying saucer weighing about 600 tons, with a crew of about 50, and originating from the planet Uranus. Still further confusion must have been caused in the minds of interested observers when the newspapers printed these inane drivellings of "Dr Randall" apparently without taking the trouble to consult the appropriate reference books in order to determine his bona fides.

Questions in the House of Commons eventually established that the crater was not caused by a bomb or a meteorite and, so far as the authorities were concerned, the matter remained unexplained. Ufologists immediately took this as a licence to indulge in wild speculations about flying saucers and their alleged electromagnetic effects and "G fields". Much was made of the fact that the magnetite in the soil in the immediate vicinity of the crater was found to have been magnetised. Much was also made of the alleged complete disappearance of potato plants at the site of the crater. (3)

The Charlton Crater, among other, similar occurrences, attracted the attention of Alan W. Sharp who, as our readers well know, does not believe in spaceships from Uranus, or in fairies or Father Christmas either, for that matter.

Mr Sharp at first thought that the crater may have been

caused by subsidence, but later revised his opinion and suggested that it was probably caused by a lightning strike. This would explain the magnetic effects observed by investigators. In a review of Leonard Cramp's Piece for a Jig-Saw, Alan Sharp wrote:

"A great deal of nonsense has been talked about the Charlton occurrence but in point of fact this was a classic example of the type of 'crater' ascribable to the strike of lightning on open ground. It displays radiating surface marks, removal of material and a central hole. It was preceded by a violent thunderstorm accompanied by strong winds and was in an area of considerable storm damage to crops. The lightning struck the ground where there was evidence of a local elevation of the water table and produced detectable magnetic effects in the magnetite-bearing soil, similar to those recorded at Cockburnspath in Scotland.

"The strike occurred at a point on a previous field boundary where a large iron straining-post had once been embedded in the ground and secured by metal stays. The disappearance of plants was by no means complete, as had been alleged by one person, according to Mr Bealing, the Shaftesbury photographer whose photographs appeared widely in the Press at the time. Captain Rodgers of the Army investigation team also reported the finding of plant remains at the site." (4)

The lightning explanation certainly seems the most logical one in the circumstances, but it has been totally ignored by British ufologists, who prefer to indulge in bizarre speculations about flying saucers and their "anti-gravity" propulsion systems. The Charlton Crater affair is a particularly interesting case in that study of the literature on the subject shows up the irrational and unscientific attitudes which prevail among British ufologists, even including those who are intelligent enough to know better.

References

1. CHAPMAN, ROBERT: Unidentified Flying Objects, Arthur Barker Ltd., London. 1969.
2. CRAMP, LEONARD G.: Piece for a Jig-Saw, Somerton Publishing Co. Ltd., Cowes, Isle of Wight. 1966.
3. Ibid., p 134.
4. SHARP, ALAN W.: Book Review, "Piece for a Jig-Saw", MUFORG Bulletin, February, 1967.

BOOK REVIEWS

Invisible Residents: a disquisition upon certain matters marine, and the possibility of intelligent life under the waters of this earth, by Ivan T. Sanderson. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1970. 7.50 dollars (£3.95 UK).

This is the latest book by the well-known Fortean Ivan T. Sanderson, and is concerned with a variety of marine mysteries. The first part of the book is given over to chronicling reports of objects entering and leaving bodies of water, light wheels, "vile vortices", disappearing planes and ships, and anomalous winds. The second part discusses the distribution of vortices and their possible nature. In the third part the author explores the possibility of super-intelligent marine life, and in the final chapter there is a study of "other intelligences", which Sanderson regards as probably "over-civilised" and quite mad. There are appendices on "disappearances on land", "vimanas", the theory of vortices and a list of objects entering and leaving bodies of fresh water. There is a bibliography giving sources.

Sanderson's ideas seem rather confused at times, and he can hardly be said to have established his hypothesis. There are also a number of errors. Dr Vallee, as far as I know, does not believe UFOs are projections (p 211). The submarine light wheels have been satisfactorily explained without reference to machines. (See FSR, 1967, 5.)

Despite these reservations, Invisible Residents contains much interesting and useful information on marine UFO cases, and is recommended to ufologists.

— Peter Rogerson

Mystery and Magic of the Occult, by John Stevens Kerr, SCM Press, 1971. £2.25

Written from a detached, if somewhat sympathetic standpoint, this book surveys briefly the historical development and present position of various aspects of the occult. At the outset the author makes clear his attitude to the occult, and where he feels the value lies in studying it:

"...the most useful approach towards understanding the occult and the people's interest in it, is not down the line of trying to discover whether (it is) 'true' by certain scientific canons or 'false'. The best understanding of the occult comes when we try to grasp why people are interested in it and accept it. The psychological and sociological dimensions of the occult suggest more to us than the scientific aspects, or their proveability."

The author is writing from a committed Christian viewpoint, and sees in the revival of occultism in recent years a reaction to the over-intellectualisation of orthodox Christianity that followed from the religion/science 'battles' of the nineteenth century. He looks forward to a synthesis of the metaphysical insights possible from some aspects of the occult with mainstream Christianity, allowing the Church to:

"...recover its paranormal, its mystical, its purely spiritual perception of reality without shame or embarrassment."

To the 'student of the occult' this book offers little that is new. To anyone who is concerned with the social aspects of the occult 'revival' and its place in modern religious attitudes this is a brief glimpse of a challenging thesis.

— John A. Rimmer

Our Haunted Planet, by John A. Keel, Fawcett, New York, 1971. 75 cents

In his introduction to this book, John Keel claims that parts of it are written "tongue-in-cheek." Your reviewer hopes that it is all written tongue-in-cheek, for a weirder collection of pseudo-scientific garbage under two covers would be difficult to find. If you believe that Homo Sapiens are de-vibrated elementals, that John Kennedy's assassination was arranged by the bogbarts, that the key to the "New Age" (whatever that means) is through "blowing your mind" with LSD, and that the Egyptians are going to invade the United States and "liberate" the Red Indians in 1999, then this book is for you (that's if your keepers let you read it—we can't have you disturbing the other patients).

Come off it, John Keel, we know you do excellent work, there's no excuse for this sort of trash.

— Peter Rogerson

M e r s e y s i d e U F O B u l l e t i n

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